

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6704

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 3123

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, YE, SA

SUBJECT: DEPARTURE OF PRINCE TURKI AND RETURN OF AL-GHASHMI

REF: SANA 3099

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRINCE TURKI UNEXPECTEDLY LEFT SANA ON NOV 9 AND CHIEF OF STAFF AL-GHASHMI RETURNED ON NOV 8. TURKI VISIT ENDED ON CORDIAL NOTE EVEN THOUGH FATE OF AL-AHMAR STILL NOT APPARENTLY DECIDED. MEANWHILE PRESIDENT AL-HAMDI REPORTEDLY "EXTREMELY HAPPY" WITH RESULTS AL-GHASHMI VISIT. INITIAL IMPRESSION IS THAT CURRENT CRISIS IN SAUDI-YEMENI RELATIONS RESOLVED POSITIVELY WITH AL-HAMDI EMERGING AS WINNER. END SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR AHMAD ABDU SAID INFORMED ME LAST EVENING NOV 9, THAT PRINCE TURKI DEPARTED SANA EARLIER SAME DAY. SAID SAID THAT UNEXPECTED DEPARTURE CAME AT CONCLUSION OF "SUCCESSFUL" QUICK TRIP TAKEN BY PRINCE TO TAIZ AND HODEIDAH WHERE HE WAS FETED AND GIVEN A WARM WELCOME REplete WITH SPEECHES OF FRIENDSHIP FOR AND GRATITUDE TO SAUDI ARABIA COUPLED WITH EMPHASIS ON SUPPORT FOR PRES HAMDI. PRINCE TURKI HIMSELF IN TAIZ REPLIED BY LONG AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECEIVED SPEECH IN WHICH HE PLEDGED INTER ALIA SAUDI/ YEMENI COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMON INTERESTS

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AND COMMON DEFENSE AGAINST FOREIGN IDEOLOGIES.

2. SAID SAID THE PRINCE ALSO HAD FINAL LUNCHEON MEETING WITH HAMDI BUT HE HAD NO DETAILS AS TO WHAT WAS DECIDED, IF ANYTHING, REGARDING SHAIKH ABDULLAH AL-AHMAR. SAID OPINED THAT EVENTUALLY "SOME JOB" WOULD BE "TAILORED" FOR THE SAHIKH BUT THE TIMING WOULD DEPEND ON HAMDI. SAID THOUGHT THAT IN ANY EVENT THE PRINCE LEFT WITH A BETTER APPRECIATION OF HAMDI'S STRENGTH AND POPULAR SUPPORT IN CONTRAST WITH AHMAR'S WEAKENED AND ISOLATED POSITION.

3. SAID SAID THAT MEANWHILE GHASHMI RETURNED TO SANA ON NOV 8 AND APPARENTLY HE IS WELL SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE TRIP. SAID SAID THAT HERE AGAIN HE HAD NO DE QILS BUT HE FOUND THE PRESIDENT "EXTREMELY HAPPY" WHEN HE SAW HIM EARLIER IN THE DAY AFTER HIS TALK WITH GHASHMI. ALSO IN THIS CONNECTION SAID SAID THAT GHASHMI CONVEYED STRONG ASSURANCES FROM PRINCE SULTAN OF SAUDI SUPPORT FOR HAMDI. SAID CONTINUED THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE IN ADDITION ASSURED THE YEMENIS THAT THE BUDGETARY SUPPORT SUBSIDIES WILL BE PAID IN A FEW DAYS. SAID CONCLUDED THAT HE TOO WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED WITH COURSE OF DEVELOPMENTS EVEN THOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT EMOTIONS HAD BEEN RUNNING HIGH EARLIER IN THE WEEK. HE HAD GOOD THINGS TO SAY ABOUT PRINCE TURKI WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS INTELLIGENT AND PERSONABLE. FINALLY HE TOLD ME THAT WHEN ABDULLAH AL-ASNAJ HAD SEEN ME EARLIER IN THE DAY HE DID NOT KNOW THAT THE PRINCE INTENDED TO LEAVE THAT SAME AFTERNOON AND FOR THIS REASON WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE WAY EVENTS SEEMED TO BE THEN DEVELOPING.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SAID WAS UNABLE TO PRQTVIDE ME WITH SPECIFICS ON EITHER THE TURKI OR THE GHASHMI MISSIONS, IT NOW LOOKS AS THOUGH WE MAY HAVE WEATHERED THIS LATEST CRISIS IN YEMENI/SAUDI RELATIONS. AS PREDICTED EARLIER, THIS SEEMINGLY HAPPY RESOLUTION MAY BE PRIMARILY DUE TO GHASHMI'S OPPORTUNE RETURN FROM RIYADH WITH BOTH SOLID ASSURANCES AND TANGIBLE COMMITMENTS. THE NEWS OF THE IMPENDING PAYMENT OF THECGUDGET SUBSIDIES MUST HAVE ALSO BEEN AN IMPORTANT FACTOR. THUS, DESPITE THE BAD VIBES WHICH TURKI GENERATED HERE, HE WAS ABLE TO DEPART IN AN ATMOSPHERE

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OF GOOD FEELING CREATED IN THE END TO SOME EXTEND BY HIS SPEECHES AND BEHAVIOR INDICATING SUPPORT FOR HAMDI AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. WE ASSUME BY NOW THAT THE EMBASSY HAS ALREADY CONVEYED OUR BRIEFING OF THE SITUATION TO THE SAUDIS. WE HOPE IT WILL BE USEFUL TO THEM IN THE FUTURE BY GIVING THEM SOME IDEA OF HOW FAR OUT ON A LIMB TURKI WAS GETTING HIMSELF, NO DOUBT UNWITTINGLY, WITH HIS YEMENI HOSTS. FOR OUR PART, WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE SAUDIS WILL NOT USE THIS

MEDIATION TECHNIQUE AGAIN BUT WE REALIZE IT IS DIFFICULT,
INDEED, TO SECOND GUESS THE SAUDIS WHEN IT COMES
TO DEALING WITH THEIR ARAB BRETHREN. MEANWHILE WE WOULD
APPRECIATE HEARING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ANYTHING
EMBASSY JIDDA CAN OBTAIN REGARDING THE SAUDI RESPONSE
TO GHASHMI AS WELL AS SAUDI REACTIONS TO TURKI VISIT.
WE INTEND OVER THE NEXT WEEK TO DO A FOLLOW-UP
THINK-PIECE ON THE TURKI AND GHASHMI MISSIONS AS
SOON AS WE CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THEM FROM THIS END.
ONE SALIENT FEATURE WHICH EMERGES AT THIS EARLY STAGE,
HOWEVER, CLEARLY
INDICATES THAT BY HOLDING HIS GROUND
HAMDI HAS COME OUT OF THIS ENCOUNTER WITH AHMAR
STRONGER AND MORE FIRMLY IN CONTROL THAN EVER. IF
THE PAST IS ANY GUIDE HAMDI CAN BE EXPECTED NOT RPT NOT TO
GO FOR AHMAR'S JUGULAR BUT RATHER WILL SEEK TO FIND
SOME FACE-SAVING SOLUTION BY WHICH A POSITION WILL NOW
BE "TAILORED" FOR THE SHAIKH WHICH GIVES HIM PRESTIGE
BUT NO POWER.
SCOTES

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